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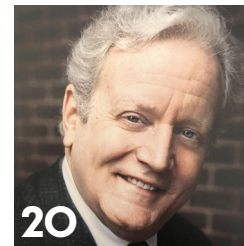
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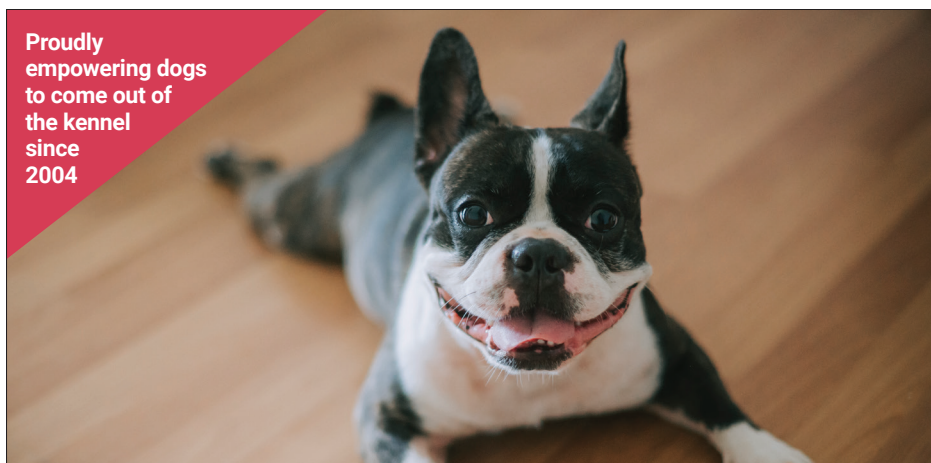
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LAVENDER[®]

Volume 28, Issue 728 • April 20-May 3, 2023

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Letters are subject to editing for grammar, punctuation, space, and libel. They should be no more than 300 words. Letters must include name, address, and phone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Priority will be given to letters that refer to material previously published in Lavender Magazine. Submit letters to Lavender Magazine, Letters to the Editor, 5100 Eden Ave, Suite 107, Edina, MN 55436 or e-mail editor@lavendermagazine.com.

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LAVENDER MEDIA, INC.

5100 Eden Ave, Suite 107, Edina, MN 55436

612-436-4660 Office

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612-436-4660 Lavender Advertising

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Get Ready For Summer!

BY RANDY STERN

After months of near-record snowstorms, icy roads and sidewalks, parking restrictions, packed emergency rooms, and auto body shops...summer is finally upon us.

At least, it is within reach!

I am sure that our favorite meteorologists will continue to remind us of potential near-record flooding across our region. That, after the record snowfalls and such, I believe in being the optimist and not have the pall of the near-record snow melt turn into more of a severe consequence to ruin your upcoming plans this summer.

Can someone please remind me who Murphy is and why that person's laws can do a number to our collective emotional health?

We try our best to put a smile on your face, hope in your life, and ideas to look forward to. Hence why this Summer Preview issue is exactly what you need right now!

Summers are not just for Pride events. We always find ourselves enjoying a local festival, an art fair, and the many available activities that are within reach from our homes. It is a celebration of the sun, blue skies, and simply being outdoors!

I know, I'm being maybe a bit too optimistic.



We know that we'll get our share of rainstorms, thunder, and lightning. Maybe some extreme weather event. Plus, the humidity, the mosquitoes...

Ahem!

Let me go back to being optimistic. We have a lot to look forward to. That is why we compiled a list of festivals and other summer activities to put on your calendar in the coming months.

One specific stop to make this summer is on Grand Avenue in Saint Paul. Grand Old Day is back after a pause due to the pandemic. Having

these great civic gatherings back on our calendar is one sign of our return to a semblance of normal.

Another sure sign that summer is almost here is to participate in the Walk To End HIV, put on by Rainbow Health. This one is a special one since it will mark Rainbow Health's 40th Anniversary. In this issue, we tell its story and invite you to walk – and raise funds – against a virus that continues to shadow our community.

The summer professional sports franchises are now underway with their respective seasons. Minnesota United FC is a team that has embraced our community among its loyal fans going back when they were called the Thunder playing in one of lower leagues of soccer in this country. They are ready to welcome us again in June. We're going to talk about all of this in hopes you can cheer for the Loons at Allianz Field in Saint Paul. Don't forget your Pride themed scarf and t-shirt!

Rest assured; summer is coming! Do you have your summer wear, shoes, and skincare products ready? I hope so! You're going to need them soon! ■

Photo by Randy Stern

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The Naked Truth

BY E.B. BOATNER

There was some grumbling when such a young man was chosen for the commission; twenty-six! Oh well, the intended block of Carrara marble was flawed—other sculptors had taken whacks, deemed it unusable, and the discarded lump had lain outdoors for twenty-five years. And, one had to admit, a couple of years back he had carved that *Pietà*...

Michelangelo considered the lump, used his knowledge of form and scale, assessed the marble's flaws, made his first hammer-strike in 1501, and in 1504 brought forth *David*.

Intended originally to be one of a series of 17 Old Testament figures placed high in the buttress of the Cathedral of Florence, David, at 17-foot and six tons, was too tall, too heavy—and just too magnificent; the populace wanted him closer, anyway, and he was given street prominence at the Piazza della Signoria, taking four days to move the half mile from the sculptor's workshop.

He's been on display ever since, now recognizable to countless thousands of all ages, around the whole wide world. We might discuss David's contrapposto stance, his confident, almost casual

pre-battle attitude, note that Goliath's head, evidence of ultimate victory is not in evidence, and so on. But for this discussion, David's one salient point is that he is *naked*: or, if you will, "in-the-buff," "à poil," "naked as a jaybird."

Nakedness of course horrified Queen Victoria; when she was gifted a replica, she ordered a plaster fig leaf cast for modesty (it's still on display at the Victorian and Albert Museum).

More recently, at a school in Tallahassee, Florida, David's nudity occasioned the resignation of a school principal after the sculpture's photo was shown to sixth graders in a class on Renaissance Art. The principal had forgotten to send postcards to parents warning of the nudity, and was offered the choice of being fired or resigning.

According to ex-principal Hope Carrasquilla (who forgot to post those cards), two parents were upset not to have been notified, while another called nakedness akin to pornographic. Barney Bishop III, chair of the school board, told NPR, "It's not the showing of the picture, it's the process. Parents are entitled to decide whether

any topic, any subject, any use of particular sensitive words are going to be discussed in the classroom."

How curious. David has been taught before; Tallahassee Classical is a Hillsdale College curriculum school *required* to teach Renaissance Art in sixth grade. Class schedules are available on the school website, readily available for parents to judge, or for administrators to flag sensitive topics.

But that's not our bailiwick. Consider rather, that the week following the Florida kerfuffle, tourists—many Americans on spring break—were drawn in droves to Florence's Galleria dell'Accademia to see David, and to take selfies in front of him, while Dario Nardella, mayor of Florence, and museum director Cecile Hollberg issued invitations for Carrasquilla and the school community to come and see the sculpture for themselves. "We are talking about the roots of Western culture, and 'David' is the height," asserted Hollberg.

One way or another, the light shines out. ■



BILLY PORTER

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Home of the 23rd U.S. President Benjamin Harrison. Photos by Carla Waldemar

When I'm visiting, say, Paris, or Rome, or Milwaukee, and announce that I'm from Minneapolis, silence falls. Then someone hazards a guess: "Oh, the city with the famous car race?"

Well, no. But that finally spurred me to visit the city that hosts the Indy 500 each May to set the record straight (and see what I'd been missing: which is, a lot!)

Here's a teaser of what Indianapolis has to offer, starting with my chic hotel, The Bottleworks—a creative repurposing of what started life as a Coca Cola bottling plant. Now its marble and glazed white bricks anchor the city's main shopping/dining artery, Massachusetts Avenue (just say "Mass Ave" to sound like a local).

Across the street from the hotel, the plant's former garage has been named (ready?) The Garage—a high-energy food court sporting dining options ranging from burgers to Brazilian, Indian to Italian and a whole atlas more.

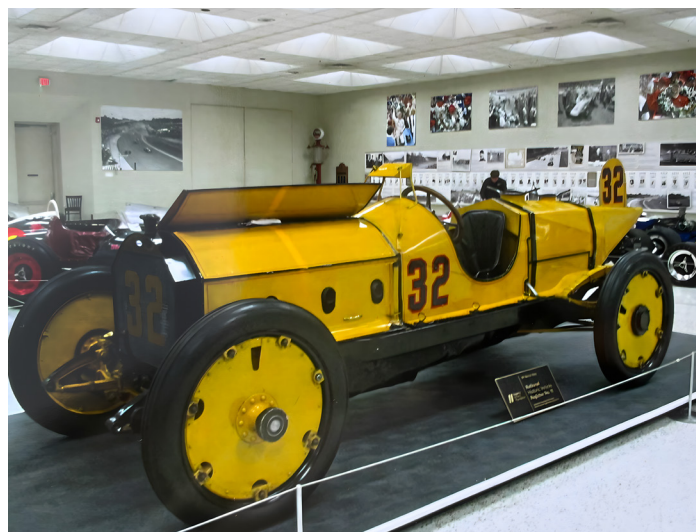
After a high-octane bite there, I headed off to a global collection of another sort: Newfields, a 150-acre nature park anchored by the Indiana Museum of Art. Greeting visitors is native son and artist Robert Indiana's famous LO/VE sculpture. Which I do.

I innocently asked a guard to steer me to the Renaissance paintings. Well, in a shake-up designed to open minds and forge new connections, they're scattered everywhere. Wander into an exhibit called Power, and you'll discover an aristocrat painted in the Renaissance next to one of a Japanese god and another of an Italian saint.

Don't miss the gallery devoted to fashions by Indy homeboys Halston, Bill Blass and more. Or the special Monet immersion experience, with

montages covering four walls, floor and ceiling—putting you right in the swim with those waterlilies.

The next morning, it's off to White River State Park, but wait! It calls for an Uber, not a canoe. Aside the urban river rises the Eiteljorg, where more distinctive art awaits, starting with the compelling Depression-era social-realist photos of Dorothea Lange. The museum then shines a light on Western art, starting with those romanticized cowboys of painter Remington in deliberate (I'm convinced) contrast with the Read Deal: the stunning pottery, jewelry, weaving and painting masterpieces by Native artists themselves.



One of the very first racing cars (a winner) at the Indiana Speedway

Continued on page 12



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I rested my brain by grabbing lunch there before heading across the street to the Indiana State Museum, which leads off with prehistoric skeletons, then fast-forwards to the Miami Indian tribe headed by a female chief, and the land grab and trail of tears soon to follow. Interactively, you're invited to pack up a covered wagon—but if you keep the family china, will there still be room for the cornmeal and bacon? Try out a log splitter, aside one actually used by young Abe Lincoln, who spent time in Indiana. By the 20th century, we can view a “labor-saving” Women's Friend washing machine and, entering the '50s, a frilly prom gown and Cabbage Patch doll.

And now for a museum of a different sort—one showcasing local author/hero Kurt Vonnegut. Follow his early writing for his high school newspaper, then his days a WW II prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany (documented in *Slaughterhouse Five*). One room is papered with reams of rejection letters; another reveals his typewriter, his specs, his clarinet (his friends included Miles Davis and Billie Holliday). A final Freedom of Speech room houses shelf after shelf of banned books.

And yes, there's a museum dedicated to another local boy who made good—our 23rd President (I had to look it up, too: Benjamin Harrison). This lawyer, who became a brigadier general in the Civil War (with no experience whatsoever), when elected to national office served (who knew?) as a forward-thinker, creating national parks, the Coast Guard, and pensions for war veterans. He also added six states to the Union, and you'll hear all this from guides like Gary Smith (plus the President's own voice on an early gramophone) as you meander through the elegant 16-room residence of 1884.

Visiting the Fountain Square Theatre, in the so-named artsy neighborhood, you'll discover a grand 1928 silent movie theatre now used for lively swing dancing (crowds of 200 people) each Friday, plus vintage bowling alleys on upper floors, a boutique hotel, and rooftop patio where drinks and music complement the view.

Then, on to the destination that anchors this city on global maps: the legendary Indianapolis Motor Speedway (tours around the 2 ½-mile track available), where the cry “Start your engines!” rings out each Memorial Day weekend as the world watches the famous 500. A museum showcases famous racing cars galore and heralds the evolution of tires, helmets, racewear, gear, and sponsors.

Now to answer that vital question: Where to eat? Start your day at Gallery Pastry Shop, under the centerpiece snow-white tree trunk that shelters indoor tables, munching on a fluffy croissant or three, then graduate to its soul-warming shrimp & grits or opulent omelets.

For dinner, grab a seat in the quirky, high-energy digs called Bluebeard, where vintage typewriters loom over the bar in homage to writer Vonnegut, where they shake his favorite cocktail, too. Entrees gambol from an imaginative beet tartare to rich salmon rilletes topped with pickled bacon fat; crab cakes dressed in pomegranate chili crisp; and on to pork loin, halibut and more.

The intimate, cosmo setting of Beholden serves as Mecca for clever small plates such as a decadent spinach and artichoke bisque, Korean short ribs, and an inventive beet ‘dirt’ salad also



Bottleworks Hotel A former Coca Cola bottling plant

starring goat cheese. They're followed by steak frites (here the star is tuna, not beef), several actual beefsteaks, duck à l'orange, and my choice, spaghetti with rabbit confit in chili tomato paste. For dessert, burnt banana ice cream with Parmesan and chili honey—which makes you realize you're not back in Minnesota.

So many choices, so little time. As the song says, come “Back Home in Indiana.” Find out how at www.VisitIndy.com ■

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Inside *The Prom* With Tyson Insixiengmai

BY LAVENDER

In the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre production of *The Prom*, local performer, creator, and artist Tyson Insixiengmai joins the cast as one of the Ensemble. We chatted with them to find out how they became a part of this production.

"What's so special about this production and performing in it is," said Insixiengmai, "I believe it's the audiences that have been coming in so far. It has attracted so many folks who are touched by this story, and I think it's so phenomenal to be able to perform it in Chanhassen."

"Every night my hope is that the story that I get to present on stage is touched by people who can also see themselves perform in an incredible story like this," said Insixiengmai. "As an Asian American and a queer person myself, I just hope that this also touches those folks who aren't able to see that in themselves. But to see someone like me on stage, they can see that they're also possible of doing that."

As an artist and performer, Insixiengmai is

finding their groove on the Chanhassen stage. "This is actually my second ever professional production that I've done on stage," said Insixiengmai. "This would be my second ever kind of theater experience that I've done before. What's different is that I am able to give it all on stage. And with that being said, I hope that it transfers out into the audience because I view performance in music and acting in art as a language and it's spoken universally, and I just hope that it translates with a lot of people."

We also asked Insixiengmai if they were cast in any role in *The Prom*, what role what they play? "I understudy Kevin," Insixiengmai answered, "he is in the teen ensemble, but if it were to be anyone, I think it would be Alyssa Green. I deeply resonate with her character and how her story is transformed from the beginning to the end of the musical. She is brought up with her mother, Mrs. Green, and she just has to be perfect in her song. She is just everything that she needs to be for her mother, but at



Photo courtesy of Chanhassen Dinner Theatre

the end of the day, she just wants to be herself. And she gets that love and support from Emma and just wants to show her that she is there and that she is able to be who she is. And so I think Alyssa would be a great character to be."

The Prom is currently playing at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre through June 10. To get your tickets, log on to www.chanhassensendt.com

Don't forget to bring your friends for a great and uplifting time with us in Chanhassen! ■

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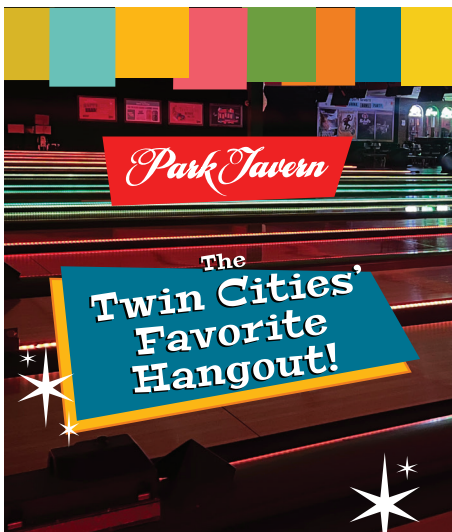
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Photos by Cory Weaver

This March, the Minnesota Opera, in collaboration with Theater Mu, brought the world premiere of *The Song Poet* to its newly opened Luminary Arts Center in the North Loop of Minneapolis. Reception has been incredibly positive, and it is easy to see why. The almost entirely Asian cast defies the operatic norm, the libretto and music are both written by women (Kao Kalia Yang and Jocelyn Hagen respectively), the music is unique for the genre, the staging includes stunning interpretive dance vignettes, and the writing never lets the heavy nature of the content get in the way of the beauty and whimsy of the storytelling. In short: it's a breath of fresh air.

The Song Poet follows the journey of librettist Kao Kalia Yang's father, Bee (Museop Kim), from his boyhood through the joys and difficulties that bring him to an exhausted adulthood. As the title suggests, Bee considers himself a "song poet" and everywhere that he goes: from the beautiful green hills of war-torn Laos to a Thai refugee camp to a new life in Minnesota and back to Laos, a literal chorus follows him. Sometimes this chorus is dressed as mountains or clouds and sometimes they are machines, but always they give voice to the song Bee finds in his every surrounding.

The Luminary Arts Center is a small venue, and, in many ways, it is the perfect venue for this kind of show. The stone and brick of the

exposed wall behind the stage accentuates the green cut outs of Laotian mountains, which look like they were pulled directly from the pages of a children's book. Set design (Mina Kinukawa) is minimal and effective. The Minnesota home the Yang family moves into is barely the suggestion of a house: a neat square of beams topped with a triangle, the suggestion of a door and a window carved out by three more beams inside the overall square. Only once the girls are grown up do the sets begin to fill out with colorful iMac G3s and fully set banquet tables.

This is an emotionally fraught story. Bee's father dies when he is two, his friend dies when Bee is still just a boy, and Bee has to navigate difficulties familiar to many refugees: realizing it is unsafe to stay in his



Continued on page 18

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beloved home country, trying to make a life in a refugee camp, and eventually navigating a new home country where he and his family are consistently treated poorly by almost everyone: the welfare man, a woman in a grocery store, an employer—I am sure the list could have gone on.

And yet amid all of this, *The Song Poet* relishes in moments of humor and whimsy. The audience I was a part of especially liked the Minnesota-specific jokes in the second act. Chue's (Corissa Bussian) dream about getting a washing machine is proof that even practical dreams deserve arias expressed in sparkling vibrato. The simultaneously heart-rending and ridiculous conversation between Bee and the dogs he befriended in the refugee camp is hilarious and silly

and left more than one audience member wiping their eyes when Bee finally leaves the two dogs behind.

The Song Poet is also unique in that it incorporates a significant amount of interpretive dance. One of the most impactful moments was a river crossing in which dancers struggle to make their way through two pieces of flowing fabric, juggling possessions and watching helplessly as their loved ones attempt their own crossings. Similarly, the brutality and monotony of factory work is told through a mechanized, percussive dance in the second act and Cheng Xiong and Elliana Vesely briefly embody Bee and Chue in a dance duet that summarized the love story that is central to *The Song Poet*.

I am so happy to see Minnesota Opera exploring stories like this one. This is a beautiful, innovative piece of opera that is a great representation of Minnesota theater at its best. Minnesota Opera collaborated with several local bookstores to bring copies of Kao Kalia Yang's books to theater-goers and there were lotus seed cookies for sale at intermission. It was a thoughtful production with a diverse, representative cast and crew. I look forward to more of the same and similar in coming seasons. ■

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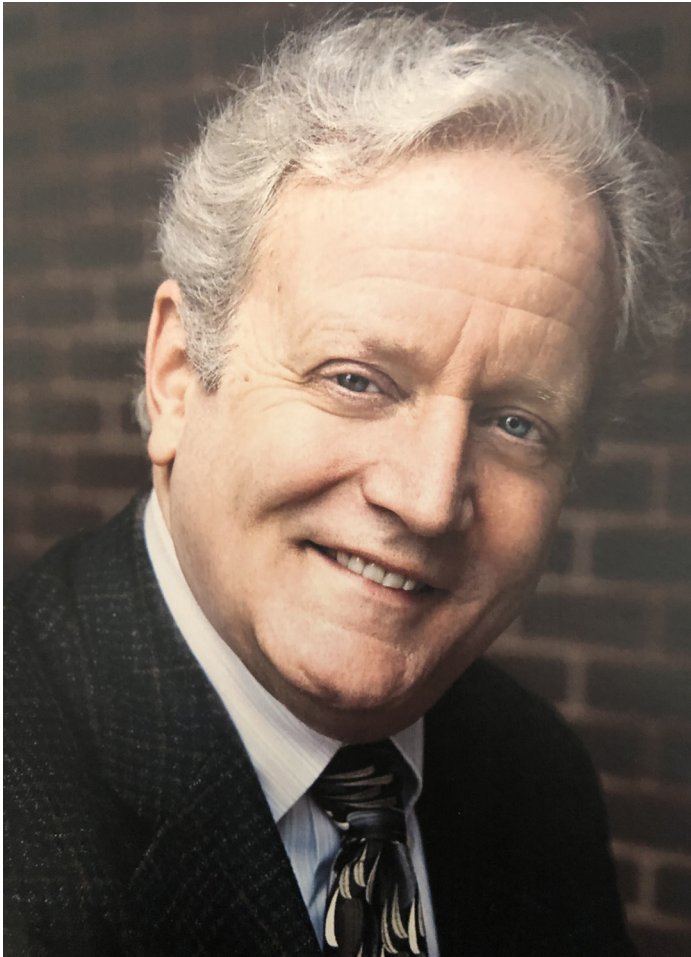
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Gary Briggie: Photo courtesy of Gary Briggie

Three Decembers... In May

BY E.B. BOATNER

Three Decembers, opening May 12 at the Jungle Theatre, will be Skylark's 75th production. Seeking to make opera more accessible to wider audiences, they've adapted and abridged some of the more formidable elements of grand opera, creating an intimate scale more welcoming to the first time opera-goer, while retaining the high musical and technical quality expected by the seasoned opera aficionado: the Chamber Opera.

A further aid to accessibility is the Skylark for Seniors program, that brings performances out to senior-living communities for those unable to access a theater, and performing the programs as as concerts rather than operas.

Skylark gives voice to people and problems not usually found as standard grand opera themes. In addition to the Mitchell's family turmoil in *Three Decembers*, past productions have included As One's transgender protagonist, and *Treemonisha*'s examination of Black lives in the early 20th century.

Three Decembers Director, Gary Briggie, talked recently with *Lavender* about the show and shared his history in the chamber opera field reaching back to 1975. After earning degrees in Bachelor of Music and Speech/Theatre degrees from St. Olaf College, he was "incredibly fortunate" to be selected for the Minnesota Opera Company's resident ensemble, under the visionary guidance of H. Wesley Balk.

Where did you go next?

In 1982, I began the peripatetic life of the freelance artist, working with regional theaters and opera companies from Florida to Alaska. I established long-term artistic associations here in the Twin Cities, in Daytona Beach and West Palm Beach, Cleveland, Sacramento, Tucson/Phoenix and Milwaukee over the years. My professional directing career began in 1979, and I've juggled singing, acting, directing and teaching for the past 48 years!

What exactly is a "Chamber Opera"?

A chamber opera is defined by its proportions: relatively small casts, often ten or fewer, no chorus, a similarly reduced instrumental accompaniment, and designed to be performed in smaller theaters, typically for audiences of less than 300.

What particularly drew you to *Three Decembers*?

Three Decembers was on my radar because I'd directed [composer] Jake Heggie's masterpiece, *Dead Man Walking*. His musical language speaks to me deeply.

Colleagues who'd performed *Three Decembers* recommended it to me, as interim artistic director of Skylark, knowing of my avid interest in new American operas and my search for entertaining, engaging chamber operas in English. As I studied the moving, accessible score, I felt it was perfect for Skylark, with a cast of three singers, the composer's reduced orchestration for two pianos, and a funny, truly touching libretto by Gene Scheer.

I've seen Maddy described variously as "fading" or "twilight" – but all performers age, and Maddy must be doing something right to be nominated for a Tony. How do you see her, direct her?

Madeline Mitchell is certainly a fascinating, complex character, charismatic, sympathetic and infuriating—in other words, fully human. The role was originally written for the world-renowned mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, who premiered the opera [in 2008] when she was 63.

The dramatic demands of the role are extensive, the vocal requirements only slightly less so, since the composer is writing here in a more musical-theater style. So, Maddy may be thought of as in her "twilight years" according to the age-ism against women so prevalent in the acting profession, but she's an undeniable artistic "force to be reckoned with," willing to tackle her first starring role in a Broadway musical late in her career, as, for example, did Hepburn, Bacall, Davis, and several of the original stars of Sondheim's *Follies*.

Since the opera spans two decades, from 1986 until her unexpected passing in 2006, Maddy seems always to blaze with life, but is perhaps like the proverbial candle that "burns most brightly just before it goes out." She gets the Tony nomination in 1996 when she's in her prime, still highly active and ambitious, showing no signs of slowing down.

It's true that she burst onto the Broadway scene as an ingenue in Katherine Cornell's company, quickly became an acclaimed leading lady, and has occasional longings for those halcyon days, but one of her most admirable traits is living life with gratitude and without regrets—for better or worse.

Norah Long will brilliantly capture that dazzling "star quality", which makes Maddy seem ageless, despite her uphill struggles. And Norah will expertly find the empathetic qualities in Maddy's personality an behavior. As a director, I'll be there to help her, and her two equally remarkable young colleagues, Tony Potts [son Charlie] and Siena Forest [daughter], find the most effective and meaningful choices.

How is *Three Decembers* relevant to today's audiences?

I think that what makes *Three Decembers* relevant are the recognizable personalities and situations in the story. This piece is about a dysfunctional family of damaged people trying to heal and love one another in positive ways. The themes of unresolved grief, challenges of being a single, working mother, the causes and effects of addictive behavior, and the absolute necessity for mutual respect, honesty and trust, are universal, and are dealt with in highly empathetic ways, humorously and dramatically. Love is only part of the resolution for this family—but it's the most significant part.

Skylark has metamorphosed since its founding in 1980; how do you look to the future?

Skylark Opera Theatre continues to evolve in wonderful ways. I first performed with the company in 1997, when it was Northstar Opera, (founded in 1980 as Opera in St. Paul), producing operettas, traditional opera and rarely performed works. I directed Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* (1998), Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe* (2006), *Berlin to Broadway With Kurt Weill* and Offenbach's *La Belle Helene* (both in 2003), which demonstrate the spectrum of the company's work. In 2016, it was rebranded as Skylark Opera Theatre, and continues to expand its mission and repertoire to include musicals, music-theater, classic and contemporary opera, sung in English and innovatively staged.

And audience response?

I'm pleased to report that audiences have shown great support for the smaller works in intimate spaces. My adaptation of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, performed in the main gallery at TMORA, was a sold-out success.

Jungle Theatre should be an especially good fit for this opera.

The Jungle will be an appropriately "theatrical" venue for this opera about

a Broadway star and her adult children. The acoustics are ideal, since the singers don't use mics, and audiences will be able to appreciate the subtleties of their acting without the need for or distraction of supertitles.

Was the original opera commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera from a play or a story by Terrance McNally?

The opera was commissioned by Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera in 2008, and when Jake Heggie asked his friend and collaborator Terrence McNally for some ideas about a story, the esteemed playwright immediately suggested his one-act play, *Some Christmas Letters*, written for an AIDS benefit and performed with Julie Harris as Maddy.

Gene Scheer masterfully turned that script into the libretto, keeping the humor and sensitivity of the original while increasing the dramatic tensions and emotional impact. Heggie's eloquent musical language lifts the text into operatic territory, although he's called the piece his "musical," due to its melodic accessibility.

Any other aspects of *Three Decembers* you'd like to share with Lavender readers?

Since Madeline Mitchell's son, Charlie, is gay and tragically loses his beloved partner to AIDS, I am immensely grateful to Dylan Boyer at the Aliveness Project for collaborating with us during the run of the show, to provide educational information about AIDS, HIV testing, and supportive resources available in our community. We look forward to a panel discussion with Aliveness staff and members of our cast, after a Sunday matinee, to increase awareness and understanding.

Three Decembers will play at the Jungle Theatre May 12-14 and 19-21, 2023. For further information, see www.jungletheatre.org. ■

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How To Have A Grand Old Day In Saint Paul This June

BY ELISE MAREN

After three years of being unable to kick off summer with Grand Old Day due to the pandemic, it returns this year on June 4th from 9:30 AM-6:00 PM for its 50th anniversary! According to co-chair Brian Wagner, the committee organizing the event felt that the health of our community is more important than the strong desire to gather and maintain this treasured tradition.



This is the largest one-day festival in the Midwest attracting over 200,000 guests. Visitors can expect Minnesota State Fair-style crowds running up and down two miles of the three mile Grand Old Day corridor of Grand Avenue. Familiar attractions will include the parade, entertainment stages at Billy's and Red Rabbit, as well as a family area at Hidden River Junior High. New or returning festival attractions include a car show, a two-mile fun run, a pride stage, a major media sponsored stage, a pickleball exhibition match, a cornhole tournament, dog races, a non-profit and artisan corridor, a high school stage sponsored by School of Rock, and a mocktail garden.

Grand Old Day is proud to kick off Pride Month on the first weekend of June.

The fun run will begin just west of Snelling Avenue and end at Dale beginning at 8:00 AM. The 85-100 entries in the parade will begin at 9:30 AM and last approximately until 11:00 AM. The parade includes everything from the Saint Paul Winter Carnival Bouncing Team to dignitaries, marching bands, floats, and our local Vulcans. The Vulcans are a group of local performers that exist based on an intriguing Winter Carnival legend that is worth reading about. There will be a few parade surprises to celebrate the 50th anniversary. There are reportedly many people

who have experienced meeting their significant other from across the intersection, so single attendees may find themselves in the midst of a Hallmark-style meet cute.

Families can play on the western end of Grand in dozens of inflatables, bungee trampolines, petting zoo, and by watching dog races. The School of Rock Stage will occur in the Patagonia parking lot and the dog races will happen at high noon on the Macalester College campus. Children can create their own art at the local Junior High. As visitors wander east, artisans can be found selling their wares and our lovely Twin Cities non-profits will be recruiting and fundraising. Multiple local and regional artists will be represented in the artisan corridor from Hamline to Snelling. One local artist is coordinating live performance art and hands-on art making to engage with the visitors and artists who are present.

Grand Old Day will host stages and beer gardens along with a diverse musical lineup that will be announced in May. Attendees may even see some WWF-style wrestling. There will be a wide variety of food that includes Midwestern fair classics such as offerings from restaurants on Grand, hot cheese curds, corn dogs, mini donuts, and ice cream. Grand Old Day looks forward to welcoming Justin Sutherland with his new sandwich shop, the Big E, on Grand Avenue. Justin Sutherland is an

Photos courtesy of the Grand Avenue Business Association



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acclaimed Twin Cities Chef that opened the first location of the Big E in Portland, Oregon last year. This gourmet sandwich shop will inhabit the former Grand Pizzeria space located next to Grand Ole Creamery. Justin Sutherland won “Iron Chef America” and owns other Twin Cities restaurants like the Handsome Hog. Big E is named after Biggie Smalls, one of Justin Sutherland’s favorite rappers. All of the sandwiches are named for certain musicians or songs that he loves like “Her Name is Yoshimi”, which melds scrambled egg with pickled daikon, lump crab, bean sprout, scallions, and miso aioli. Eggs appear to be a central theme in the menu.

On September 10th, Grand Avenue will host Paws on Grand which includes Weiner dog races, a pet marketplace, and pet portraits. Several rescue organizations attend and host doggie kissing booths. Grand Avenue also hosts the Grand Meander in December which features holiday markets, caroling, and visits to Santa.

Many thanks to festival co-chair Brian Wagner for making this event and article possible. We appreciate his passion for community building and supporting Twin Cities small businesses. The Reimagine Grand Old Day Task Force aims to continue the event in a sustainable fashion from which to grow that also prioritizes engaging community residents and promotes Grand Avenue as a world-class destination for shopping, entertainment, and dining. More information can be found at www.grandave.com or the event Facebook page.

2023 Summer What To Do

BY LINDA RAINES

Summers in Minnesota are all-too short, these warm and golden days that are to be savored and treasured after a long, cold winter. Residents here know not to squander them, we know to fill them with as much fun and activity as we can, and local communities are more than happy to help out by providing a multitude of festivals, fairs, and celebrations to fill these long, sun-soaked days.



Photo courtesy of BigStock/BAZA Production

JUNE

Edina Art Fair

June 2 – 4 · 50th and France, Edina, MN
With approximately 250,000 – 300,000 visitors to this three-day festival, this top ranked art fair is not one to be missed!
www.50thandfrance.com/art-fair

Minnesota United FC Pride Night

June 3 · 7:30 PM · Alliance Field, St. Paul, MN
Show your Pride as the Loons take to the field against Toronto FC and show their support for the incredible diversity among their LGBTQ+ fans.
www.mnufc.com

Grand Old Day

June 4 · Grand Avenue, St. Paul, MN
It's back and better than ever! St. Paul's kick-off to summer makes its return.
www.grandave.com/grand-old-day

Saint Paul Saints Pride Night

June 8 · 7:07 PM · CHS Field, St. Paul
Dress in your rainbow best and come out to see the Saints take on Iowa!
www.milb.com/st-paul

Judy Garland Festival 2023

June 8 – 11 · Grand Rapids, MN
Grab your ruby slippers and travel the yellow brick road to Dorothy's hometown...not Kansas, but the hometown of Judy Garland!
www.judygarlandmuseum.com

Excelsior Art On The Lake

June 10 – 11 · Water Street, Excelsior, MN
Enjoy perusing over 140 artists displaying original works alongside live music and a variety of food offerings.
www.excelsiorlakeminnetonkachamber.com/art-on-the-lake

Minnesota Twins Pride Night

June 16 · 7:10 PM · Twins vs. Detroit · Target Field, Minneapolis
Dress in your rainbow gear and cheer on the Twins as they celebrate the vibrant LGBTQIA+ community so prevalent in Twins Territory.
www.mlb.com/twins

Stone Arch Bridge Festival

June 17 – 18 · West River Parkway, Minneapolis
Join more than 200 artists and culinary artists for this festival along the river in our 28th year.
www.stonearchbridgefestival.com

Minnesota Lynx Pride Night

June 22 · 7:00 PM · Target Center, Minneapolis
Come out and celebrate Pride Night as the Lynx take on the Connecticut Sun.
www.lynx.wnba.com

Twin Cities Jazz Festival

June 23 – 24 · Mears Park, 221 5th St. E., St. Paul
Join us to help us celebrate our 25th year!
www.twincitiesjazzfestival.com

Wayzata Art Experience

June 24 – 25 · Downtown Wayzata, MN
The jewel of Lake Minnetonka welcomes art lovers from across the Twin Cities to enjoy a celebration of art, music, food, and fun for all ages.
www.artexperience.wayzatachamber.com

JULY

Minnehaha Falls Art Fair

July 14 – 16 · Minnehaha Falls Park, Minneapolis, MN
Join us for a Zero Waste Event! Every booth will have at least some items under \$30. Parking is very limited, so biking and public transportation are recommended.
www.minnehahafallsartfair.com

Lakefront Music Fest 2023

July 14 – 15 · Lakefront Park, Prior Lake, MN
Rock music? We've got it. Country music? We've got that, too! Lynyrd Skynyrd, Darius Rucker, REO Speedwagon and more!
www.lakefrontmusicfest.com

Stillwater Lumberjack Days

July 14 – 16 · Lowell Park, Riverfront, Stillwater, MN
Don your plaid and join us for the 86th Annual Stillwater Lumberjack Days filled with live music, a parade, a medallion hunt, vendors, contests and Lumberjack competitions!
www.lumberjackdays.com

Loring Park Art Festival

July 29 – 30 · Loring Park, Minneapolis

A Twin Cities staple since 2000, this event features 140 visual artists showcasing and selling their work, strolling musicians, stage performances, children's activities and numerous culinary options for everyone. www.loringparkartfestival.com

Aquatennial

July 19 – 22 · Minneapolis, MN

A parade, fireworks, fun for all ages – this is the official civic celebration of the City of Minneapolis! www.aquatennial.com

North Star Regional Rodeo

July 29 – 30 · Gates open at 11 AM ·

Deadbroke Arena, Hugo, MN

Come out and enjoy competition between some of the best LGBTQ rodeo riders and competitors in the Midwest. www.nsgro.org

Minnesota Pottery Festival

July 29 – 30 · Masonic West River Park, Hutchinson, MN

Featuring 35 potters from all over the nation, you can browse racks of original, unique gifts from the weird to the wonderful. Demonstrations, free kids' activities, food and beverage trucks and more. www.mnpotteryfestival.com

AUGUST

Uptown Art Fair

August 4 – 6 · Lake Street and Hennepin Avenue, Uptown, Minneapolis

Produced by the Uptown Association, this juried fine arts festival has a reputation for being one of the most exceptional art fairs in the country. www.uptownminneapolis.com/uptown-art-fair

Powderhorn Art Fair

August 5 – 6 · Powderhorn Park, Minneapolis

Come on out for the 32nd annual fine art and fine crafts event featuring over 150 artists, immersive art installations, food vendors and more! www.powderhornartfair.com

Minnesota Fringe Festival

August 3 – 13th · Various venues

There's something for everyone at the Fringe! www.minnesotafringe.org

Bayfront Blues Festival 2023

August 11 – 13 · Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth, MN

One of the largest annual outdoor music events in the upper Midwest hosts nearly 20,000 fans to more than 30 different acts on two stages. www.bayfrontblues.com

LGBTQ+ Boundary Waters Trip

August 23 – 27 · \$795 per person, with possible financial assistance based on need · Maximum of 8 in group · Ely, MN
Ely Outfitting Company & Boundary Waters Guide Service is a gay-owned business that supports diversity and inclusion in outdoor spaces, so this is a great opportunity to make new friends and meet interesting people in a beautiful locale! www.elyoutfittingcompany.com/lgbtq-boundary-waters-trip

Minnesota State Fair

August 24 – September 4 · Minnesota State Fairgrounds, St. Paul

Pronto Pups, cheese curds, deep-fried everything on a stick, music, animals and hanging out with thousands of people? It can only be The Great Minnesota Get-Together! www.mnstatefair.org

NAGAAA Softball World Series

August 28 – September 2 · Various sites in the Metro Area

"Light Up the North" as one of the largest annual gay sporting events in the world returns to Minnesota! Over 200 teams from 45 cities across the US and Canada will take part in nearly 900 games at softball complexes in the metro area. Don't miss out! www.lightupthenorth.org

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Photos by Sophia Hantizes

Yesterday's Rain, Tomorrow's Rainbow

BY KASSIDY TARALA

With both its fortieth anniversary and annual Walk to End HIV this summer, Rainbow Health has a lot to celebrate this year.

As Rainbow Health CEO Jeremy Hanson Willis says, “It’s vital we remember that 2023 is not just the forty-year recognition of Rainbow Health or Minnesota AIDS Project or any one organization; 2023 is the recognition that we as a community have come together time and again to demand what we deserve and build what we need.”

But it’s clear that Minnesota’s LGBTQ community wouldn’t be where we are today without the work of organizations like Rainbow Health, which was founded in 1983 as Minnesota’s first organization to fight AIDS as the Minnesota AIDS Project (MAP).

For more than thirty years, MAP focused its work on leading the fight to end HIV in Minnesota. Five years ago, MAP merged with the Rainbow Health Initiative and Training to Serve, and it later renamed itself Rainbow Health.

“We advocate for and serve LGBTQ+ communities, people living with HIV, and others facing barriers to health care,” Hanson Willis says. “Our approach is trauma-informed, harm reduction-based, and meets people where they are. We are grounded in the legacy of our fight against HIV by applying the models of advocacy and care that the AIDS movement pioneered to address the health issues our community faces today.”

As the fight against AIDS and the fight for LGBTQ health equity has transformed over the past forty years, so too must our movement for social change, Hanson Willis emphasizes. “While we have made great medical progress, that has not been matched by social progress. Today, the fight against HIV and health injustice is less about access to life-saving medicine than it is about ending racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.”

He continues, “The best way to fight HIV and other health issues facing LGBTQ communities is to fight for greater health equity and that

is Rainbow Health’s focus today. Our legacy organizations merged to become greater than the sum of our parts and focus resources and energy on those at the intersection of multiple identities.”

This emphasis on social justice has been core to Rainbow Health since its merger, which sharpened the organization’s focus on fighting for health equity over any one disease or community.

“We’ve done this by providing compassionate whole-person care and by advocating for healthcare that says anyone can go to any hospital, any clinic, any treatment center, or any senior center in Minnesota and get the care they need and deserve,” Hanson Willis explains.

The merger has also strengthened Rainbow Health’s commitment to whole-person care, which connects medical and mental health with other services, like housing, legal advocacy, and more.

“Rainbow Health’s unified mission is more relevant to our current context and the current realities of people’s lives as diverse people,” he adds.

While Rainbow Health’s commitment to ending HIV in Minnesota is a priority—especially with HIV outbreaks in Minneapolis and Duluth—it also offers free PrEP for HIV, free tele-health medical visits to access PrEP, free injecting drug syringes, and free HIV tests.

“We provide the most comprehensive care for people living with HIV in Minnesota to help get people’s viral load to undetectable, making their HIV untransmittable. Secondly, we are expanding our mental health therapy as fast as we can to meet the unique and specialized needs of our community. We now have fifteen psychotherapists providing care to individuals, families, and groups – both youth and adults,” Hanson Willis says. “Thirdly, we’re growing our commitment to advocating for and serving older LGBTQ+ folks and people aging with HIV. Lastly, we are working hard to make sure that all of our more than twenty programs are aligned so that it’s easier for people to access whatever they need.”

Rainbow Health recently announced its largest private donation in the organization’s history: A \$2 million, three-year grant from the United Health Foundation that will expand access to mental health and support



services to LGBTQ and BIPOC youth and young adults. This will provide culturally responsive, high-quality, affirming mental health care to more than 250 young Minnesotans. It will also directly address the high rates of suicide, depression, and anxiety in our community for hundreds of young people and their families.

As Rainbow Health celebrates its fortieth anniversary, it's also preparing for the thirty-fourth Annual Minnesota Walk to End HIV, which will be on Saturday, May 13 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Como Midway Picnic Pavilion in Saint Paul.

"Our theme this year focuses on the 'Power of Community: Honoring Our Past. Building the Future.' We wanted the Walk to End HIV to be a celebration of the progress and strides our collec-

tive community has made together in our work to end HIV," Hanson Willis says. "This half-day event will feature speakers, performances, a community resource fair, food trucks, family-friendly activities, and much more. All are welcome to walk with us in remembrance and in honor of the lives lost and the thousands of Minnesotans whose daily lives continue to be impacted by HIV today."

To mark its fortieth anniversary, Rainbow Health is looking to the future and preparing for what's next.

"What's next is centering and affirming those who face the most barriers to health and have the greatest need for affirmation," Hanson Willis says. "What's next is shaking up the status quo and designing new ways to connect people to care. What's next is supporting the voices of the unheard. What's next is demanding what we deserve and building what we need. What's next is moving forward by leaving no one behind."

He adds, "We celebrate our legacy by taking it into the future." ■

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"No Hands Fans"

Minnesota United Football Club Is Followed by Dark Clouds...And Likes It

BY TERRANCE GRIEP

It's the craziest rain you'll ever experience, a slurry of sight and sound and self...and something else, as well. That craziness makes sense, of course, because this rain comes from the southern section of a major league stadium, itself a giant, argent nimbus nestled into the intersection of Interstate 94 and Snelling Avenue.

It's a rain of sight: the waving is the most obvious part of such spoutage—that is, the flag-waving, the foam-waving, the tifo-waving, the scarf-waving, the hand-waving, and even the occasional baby-waving. The crazy rain is a rain of sound, too: front rank musical instruments hit the notes with all the careful precision of an ax murder, stitching unbalanced voices into a Frankensound somewhere between a chant and shanty: Minnesota Black and Blue, woo-ooo-oo-woo!

While the crazy rain fortifies the home team, that drizzle simultaneously corrodes the players wearing uniforms that are neither black nor blue—that is to say, Brand X, the visitors, the opponents, they who bar the home team's way to victory. These eleven pitiable figures—especially the poor goal keeper—are buffeted by torrents of vocal bruises that are as well-researched as they are well-crafted.

This shower of proud, self-described "jackassery" is precipitated by the Dark Clouds, a fan organization whose mission is "to support Minnesota United Football Club and actively build communities where all around welcome," according to its website. (Minnesota United Football Club, nicknamed the Loons, is, of course, the Saint Paul-based Major League Soccer franchise indulging in that handsless sport that arrogantly calls itself "football" in nations not abbreviated with letters U, S, and A.)

At first glance, a cumulonimbus-themed fan group supporting a duck-themed pro team might seem incongruent, but the truth is, the Loons' most fervent fandom predates the Loons by many moons. The Dark Clouds formed in 2004 to support the then-current local professional soccer team, the Minnesota Thunder. The fan group's origin was a humble one, like-minded, like-hearted soccer-lovers finding each other during games like droplets of water combining in a tuxedo blue troposphere. The fan group got thicker even as the pro team grew thinner.

The Minnesota Thunder eventually rumbled into myth and history...but the Dark Clouds persisted. They loved the now-dissipated team, sure...but they loved the now-dissipated team's sport even more. The Dark Clouds have since supported Minnesota-based professional soccer as it's manifested across various leagues and with different teams, including two versions of the

Minnesota Stars, as well as the pre-Major League and current Minnesota United Football Club. Each new manifestation forced the Dark Clouds to drift from venue to venue... but in recent years, they've found a (hopefully) permanent home in Sections 22 and 23 of Allianz Field.

Over the course of their nearly two decades of collective existence, the Dark Clouds have become more than just a rabid gaggle of Loons-loony fans—they've made themselves into a kind of team of their own, sporting such grown-up features as bylaws, awards, newsletters, and a board of directors. This infrastructure is most meaningful when it makes real the Dark Cloud's charity work, brought to benevolent life under the banner of the Silver Lining. Benefiting local charities include the Sanneh Foundation, Second Harvest Heartland, and Free Bikes 4 Kids, among many, many others.

Just as dark clouds contribute to rainbows, the Dark Clouds contribute to human rights. "June is Pride Month," the community builders note on their website, "when we take the opportunity to celebrate and support LGBTQ communities in Minnesota and beyond." In past years, this support has taken shape in a way that turns the Loons' on-field success into the Dark Clouds' off-field benevolence.

Silver Lining's Prideraisers has offered donors the opportunity to pledge a dollar amount for each goal scored by Minnesota United during the month of June. Past donees of these suspense-inducing donations have included such Twin Cities queer stalwarts as Reclaim!, the Aliveness Project, and Avenues for Homeless Youth. Other nonprofits with which the Dark Clouds have collaborated include Twin Cities Pride, TC Jacks, Gay4Soccer, OutfrontMN, Playing For Pride, Trans Lifeline, Trans United, and the Victory Institute.

The team being supported by the Dark Clouds boasts its own means of queer support, as well. On June 3, 2023, the Minnesota United Football Club will host Pride Night, the details of which, like love, they're happy to share. "The Loons LOVE love," the team's website proclaims. "Minnesota United is focusing on amplifying the rich diversity that lives within the LGBTQ+ community."

Pride is celebrated by the Loons after and before the actual game. "Match activations include a game-worn jersey auction and added entertainment and experiences on the Lawn Layover," Minnesota United's website predicts, referring to a kind of official yard party that precedes every home game.



Photo by Randy Stern

This commitment to LGBTQ equality is no mere fad: Minnesota United Football Club was the first professional sports team to sign, as a group, the pledge crafted by Athlete Ally, a nonprofit organization that provides public awareness campaigns, educational programming, and tools to foster inclusive sports communities. As the Loons put it, "The club celebrates Pride all-year long, but Pride Night is a chance to highlight, reflect, and spread awareness on the mission to protect queer and trans rights."

Regardless of what a given weather report might predict, the Loons, while playing at home, will always be followed by Dark Clouds that release crazy rain made of sight and sound and self...and something else, as well—simple belonging. "All are welcome," both the team and their fans echo, again and again, on their disparate websites. And so long as soccer's craziest fans occupy the chrome-glittery Allianz Field, the Dark Clouds will always be surrounded by a silver lining. ■

Minnesota United FC Pride Night vs Toronto FC

June 3, 2023 at 7:30 PM

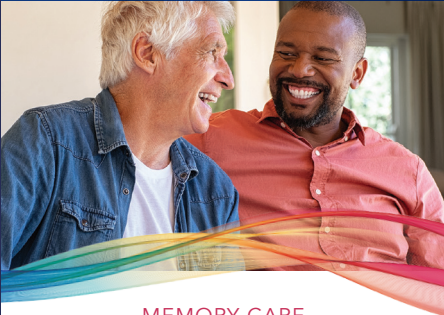
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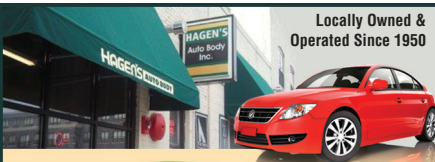
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The Challenge of Home Mortgages for LGBTQ Seniors

BY RANDY STERN

The most important step to buying a new home is to get the financing necessary to pay for it. A mortgage is a rite of passage where the first-time home buyer goes through a test of ensuring you can afford a home.

For LGBTQ seniors, they have experience dealing with mortgages. Whether they have paid off their first one or are working through the latest one on their new home, the process may be familiar to seasoned homeowners.

Or, is it? We asked Bob Austin, a Mortgage banker at Alerus in Minnetonka to give us his take on the financing side of home buying and selling for LGBTQ seniors.

In regards to the current market, Austin also reports that “there really isn’t any risk special to the LGBTQ senior in the current market, however, there may be some surprise at what the current interest rate may be. Most retiring seniors haven’t had a mortgage in a long time or they most likely refinanced to rates in the lower 3s or even the 2s. With interest rates hovering around 6%, that could be quite the surprise.”

In fact, mortgage rates continue to rise. The latest figures show rates now closing in on 7%.

If you’re the one selling your current home, “one thing to keep in mind when selling is that there will generally be cost involved as a

seller,” explains Austin. “This cost may impact your net proceeds from the sale of their departure property.”

Austin further explains that “[a] general rule of thumb is to take 92% of the sale price as the amount of proceeds you would get from the sale of the home. Then, reduce that amount by any mortgages that you have on the property. So if you sold your home for \$400,000, you would receive approximately \$368,000 from that sale. If you still owe \$200,000 on that property, you would net \$168,000. This \$168,000 could then be used for your down payment and closing cost on the purchase of the new property. The best way to determine what your net proceeds would be is to ask your Realtor to complete what is called a Net Sheet.”

At this point, you already found your next home. However, Austin points out that “Seniors tend to prefer buying a new property before selling their departure property, as they may feel more secure knowing where they will live before selling their home. This could pose a problem if they don’t have significant funds for a down payment and closing cost.”

“Generally,” Austin explains, “seniors may have paid off or paid down their mortgage to a level that provides them with a lot of equity and if this is the case, they may be able to use a

bridge loan for the down payment and closing cost on the new purchase. A bridge loan is a loan on the departure property and is paid back when the property sells.”

Another point Austin makes is regarding home buyers who have since retired from work. “If applying for a mortgage to purchase as retired person,” explained Austin, “you would need to have a consistent income. Social Security income and retirement/pension income can be used for qualifying for a loan, but it may be less than what someone was making prior to retiring. So it’s a good idea to get pre-approved to determine if the income is sufficient qualify for the loan.”

Austin continues that, sometimes, “pension income may not be enough, but increasing the distribution from the pension plan may work just fine. For social security income, you would want to have the set up and have a benefits award letter showing the amount of the monthly income.”

When you are ready to switch homes, get a good mortgage banker to guide you through the process. This alone will make your home shopping process much easier – especially for us LGBTQ Seniors! ■

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